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a candid & judicious essay on the  
subject of Dietetics -

Inaugural Essay -

Dated March 17<sup>th</sup>

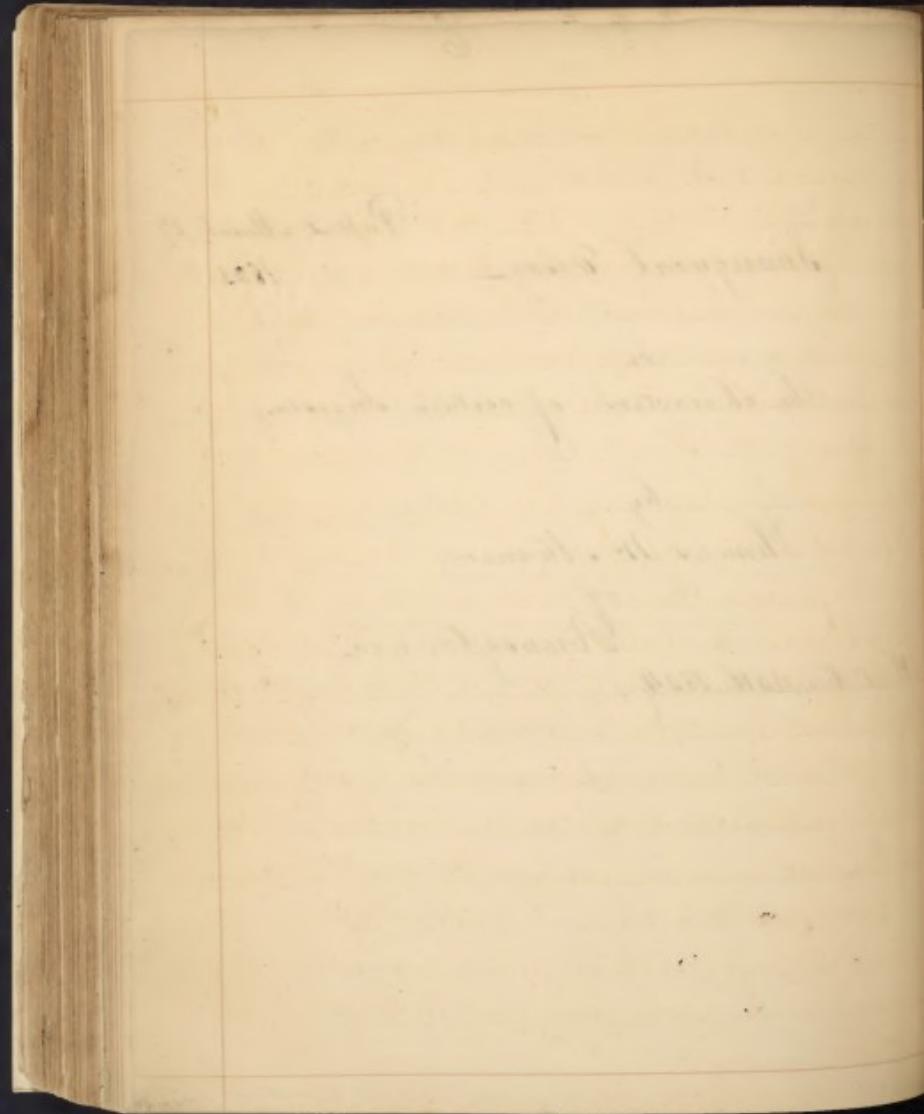
1825

on  
the characters of certain Ingesta -

by  
Thomas M. Miner,

of  
Pennsylvania -

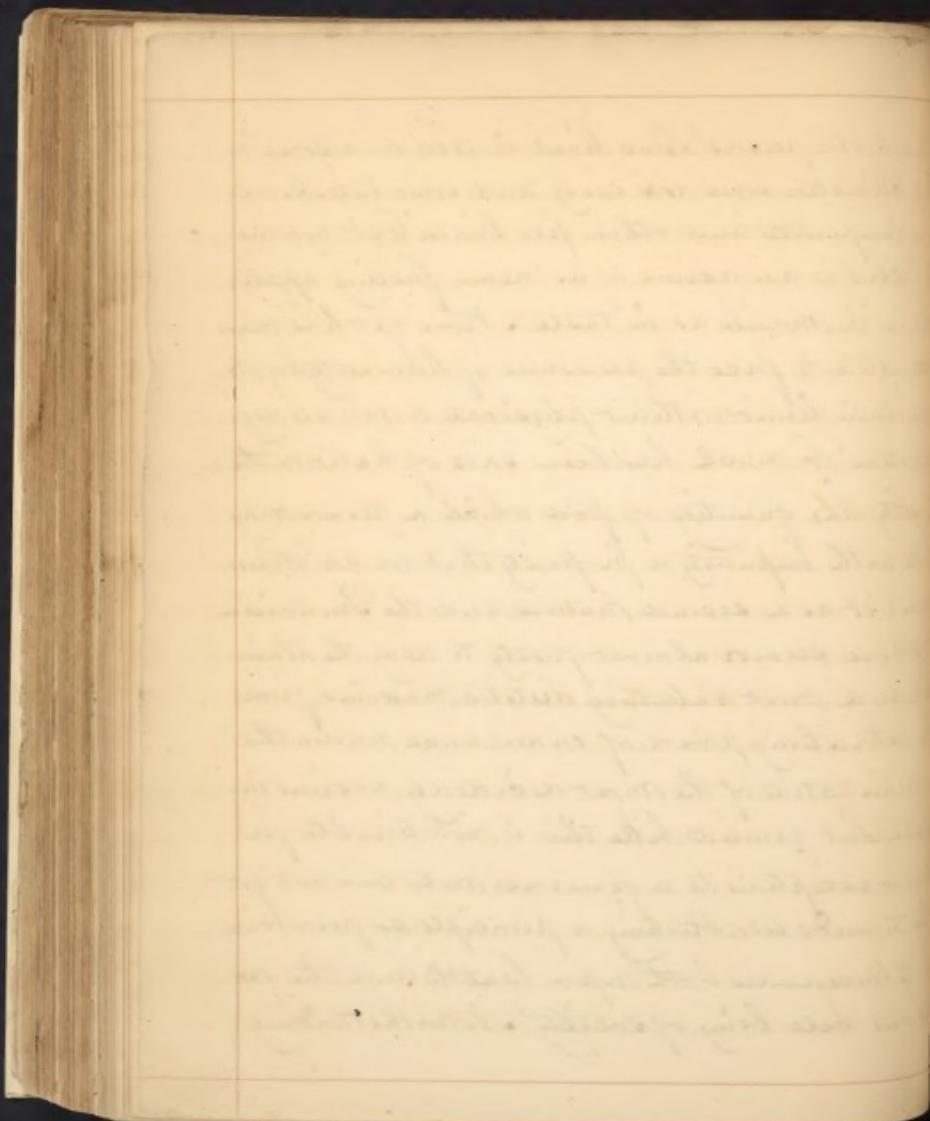
October 15th. 1824.



Numerous and diversified as are the causes of disease  
undoubtedly distinguished in the Phalanx stand the  
Ingesta. Old age is said to be the only natural dis-  
ease inflicted upon man. For the rest we may thank  
our ingenuity and the stars. The Curries of the East  
the complex sauces of France and the grapes of  
Spain and Portugal have been the enemies of man.  
The sins of the Roman banquets have been vis-  
ited upon the heads of their imbecile generation.  
Whether nature ever so fashioned the crazy ten-  
ment of man that it should endure the storms  
of a thousand winters I cannot pretend to say.  
Here are evidences facts vs and theory supplies  
little but conjecture. But that life may be in-  
creased youth prolonged age made less infirm  
and death retarded is as conformable to theory  
as demonstrable in practice. What is the cause  
of Longevity it is unquestionably difficult to  
say. It is impossible to find a system upon  
the accounts given from time to time of ex-



\*tremely old persons. Some lived in cold and some in  
hot climates - some rose early and some late - some  
were temperate and others free livers. "Est modus  
in rebus" is an axiom of as never failing applica-  
tion in morals as in taste. No man yet has man-  
aged to force the pleasures of humanity beyond  
a certain limit without physical or moral dege-  
radation. So much has been said of habit on the  
quality and quantity of food which a person may  
take with impunity a property that we sometimes  
regard it as a second nature and the Brunonian  
doctrine seems almost justly to deny the plain-  
est and most salutary dietary maxims from  
the astonishing powers of endurance under the  
administration of the most decidedly noxious im-  
gesta. But ground like this is not tenable for  
a few exceptions to a general rule cannot go  
far towards establishing a principle so punctious  
in its consequences both upon health and the  
order and well being of society. Notwithstanding



the tradition of the Poets that man lived first on fruit  
and the opinions of Pythagoras and the eccentric  
Popean that his food should be exclusively vege-  
table yet regarding his anatomical structure and  
his habits in every climate we arrive at the conclu-  
sion that both animal and vegetable food in  
certain proportions are best adapted to his nour-  
ishment and physical comfort. And although  
we may be told of a certain people as those of the  
extreme North living exclusively on flesh or fish  
and others as in the tropical regions making no  
of a diet entirely vegetable yet nature and  
health are assuredly better satisfied with a com-  
promise as in the middle latitudes and over the  
greater portion of our globe. The inconveniences  
resulting from a vegetable monopoly are not incon-  
siderable or unimportant. Among the most conspic-  
uous may be ranked feebleness of the stomach  
and digestive system - great irritability - general  
languor - marshiness - scrofulous and cachectic



habits of body with escapee action of the urinary or  
glands the power of digestion has been declared to be greater  
so when animal food has been taken than when vegeta-  
bles and the former or droves more much more consi-  
derable in the former than the latter. The conversion of  
animal substances to the nourishment of the system  
is in general prompter but attended with more vi-  
brance of action than when articles from the vegeta-  
ble Kingdom have been eaten. Dr. Darwin has sug-  
gested that those vegetables which approach near-  
est to the nature of animal bodies supply the great-  
est proportion of the nourishing material. Hence  
the exulent mushroom the gluten of wheat and  
other substances and the oil and kernels of seeds  
may be placed in the first rank in this relation.  
~~But though this be the case with these substances~~  
there are others which supply nearly an equal  
quantity of nutriment from the facility with  
which they can be changed into sugar or mu-  
cilage. And in combination of the latter state-

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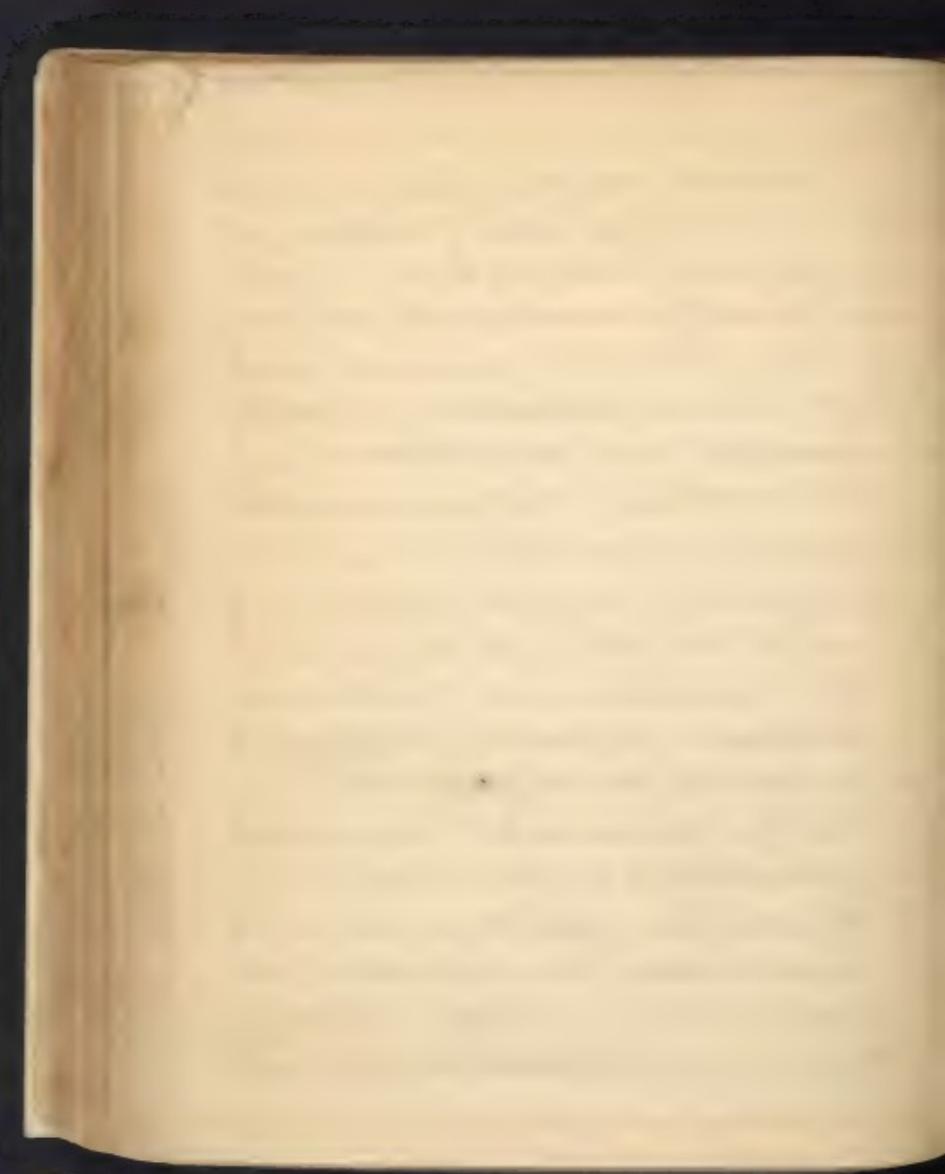
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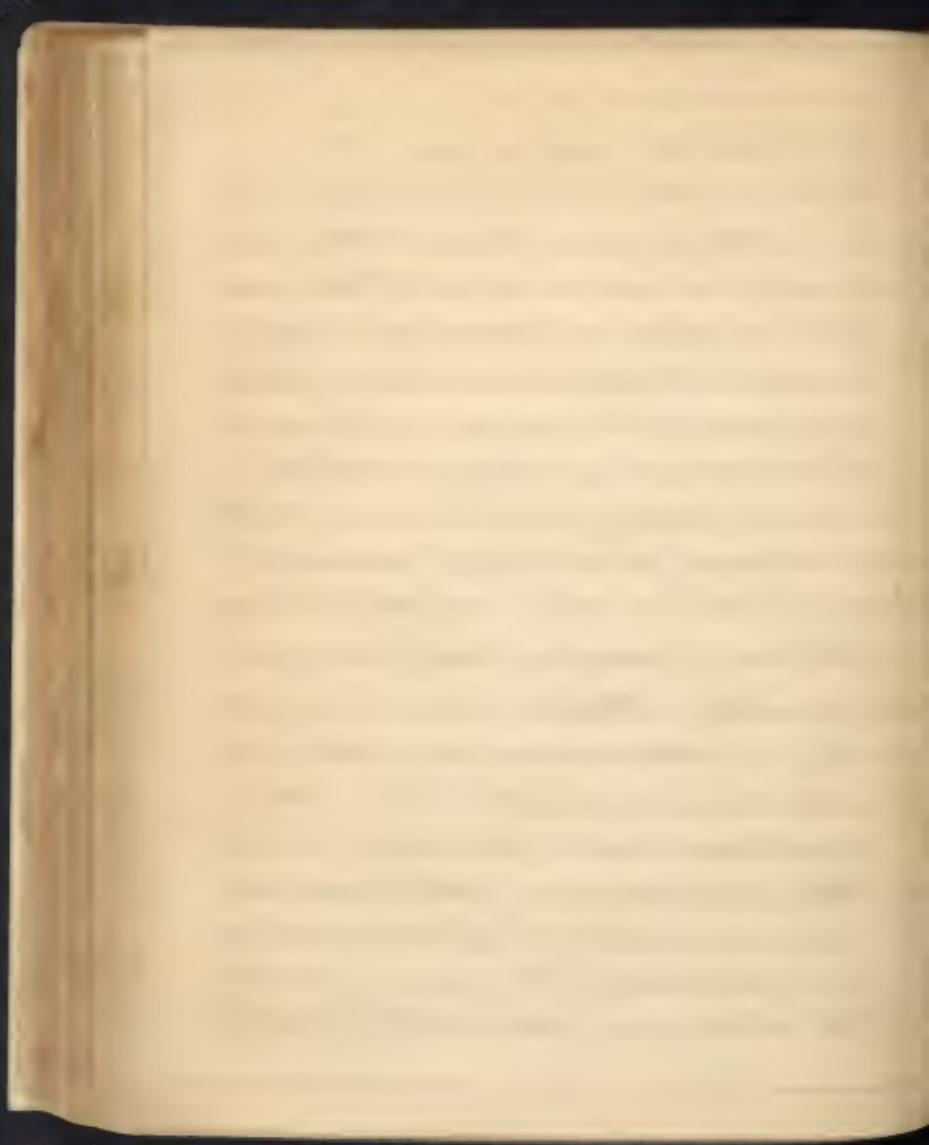
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ment we revert to the well known fact that the date which furnishes a large portion of saccharine and mucilaginous matter is a leading article of diet in Syria Egypt and Persia and that during the days of Roman magnificence they were recognized as almost indispensable by the athletes preparatory to their gymnastic exercises.

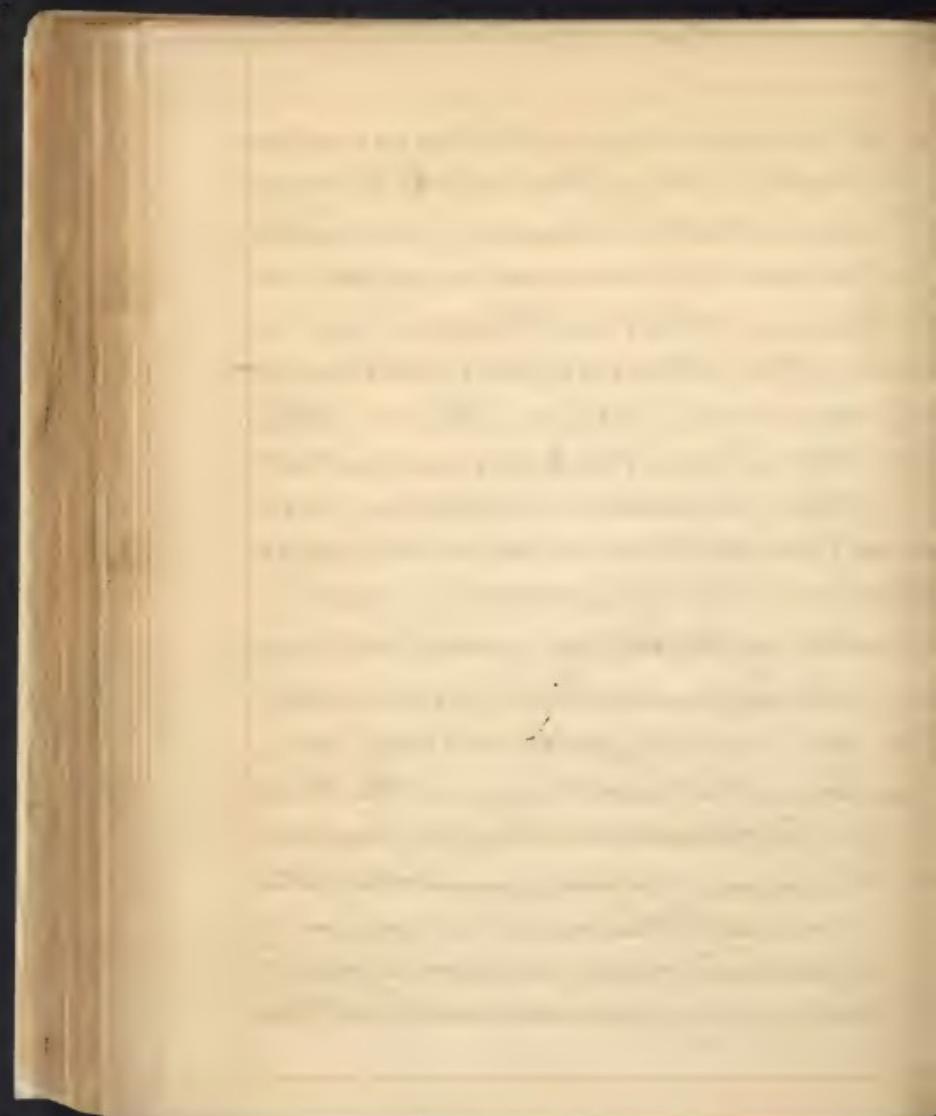
Of the vegetables in most general use the Pot herbs stand foremost. An individual whose digestive apparatus was not enfeebled by disease and whose familiarity had placed beyond all doubt the innocuous character of cabbage so far as he alone was capable of forming an opinion would probably feel very sceptical upon being told that experience had demonstrated its inapplicability in an opposite condition of the stomach. Few vegetables run into a state of putrefaction sooner than cabbage and when used it should be immediately after cutting. From the firmness of its texture and the great



quantity of fixed air given out from it during  
the process of digestion it is apt to produce flat-  
ulence Gastrodynia and disorders of the bowels.  
A peculiarity has been remarked in the digest-  
ibility of this vegetable viz: that some delicate stom-  
achs which are utterly unable to manage boile-  
ed cabbage can eat it raw as it is brought to  
our tables cut small and dressed with Vinegar.  
In Holland Germany and in numerous districts  
of our own country peopled by the descendants  
of the early Dutch and German settlers there  
is a method of preserving them by cutting into  
pieces sprinkling with salt and some aromatic  
herbs. They are afterwards put into a tub or han-  
nel packed close and left to ferment when  
it is called sour crout or sauer Kraut. This and  
all pickles of Cabbage are justly considered by  
this people unwholesome because uncooked  
in a great measure by the insipidness consequent  
on the extremes of fashinable life as wholes.

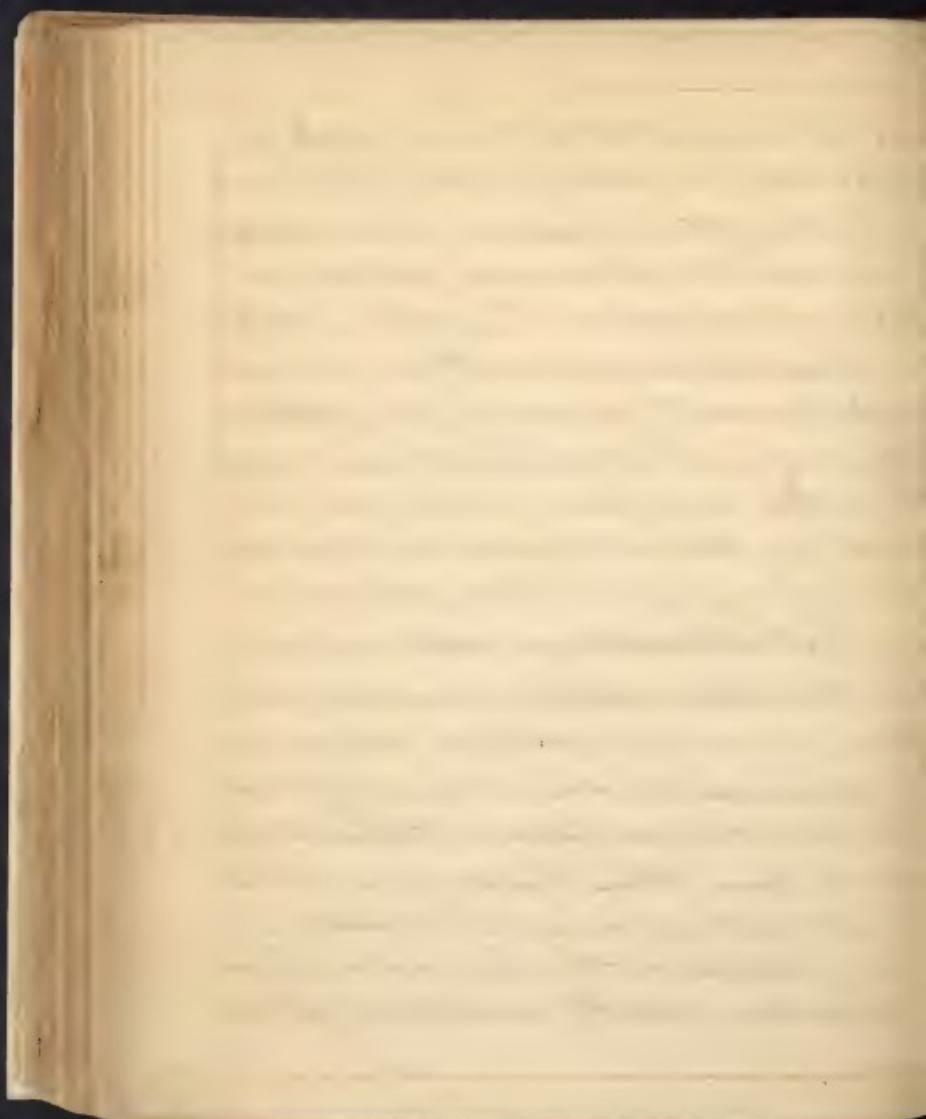


some and anti-scorbutic from the Vinegar and pickles  
they contain. During Capt. Cook's Voyage  
the most remarkable in respect to the health-  
iness of his crew—that ever was performed in a  
letter addressed to Sir John Pringle he gives an  
account of the method adopted by the Admiralty  
for the preservation of his men. He was well pro-  
vided with a large stock of corn flour. A  
pound of this was served to each man twice  
a week. Since the trial made on board Capt.  
Cook's ship it has been extensively used by  
the direction of the British government in var-  
ious other situations. It has proved itself  
beneficial in preventing Scury and curing many  
diseases. During the Revolutionary war the British  
troops lying at Boston who were fed principally  
on salt-provisions guarded against the incu-  
sion of disease by the free employment of  
this article. Care must however be bestowed  
that it be properly prepared and kept. When



burns out in a putrid state it is not only highly disagreeable to the taste but, probably also pernicious in its effects. The few ones of Mustard, Horseradish and other stimulating dietetics of a similar nature are also in a considerable degree influenced by temperament. If as is unquestionably the case they be not only admissible but highly beneficial in trophic habits in an opposite condition there must be an evident impropriety in employing them as thousands do without discrimination or regard to individual temperament.

The Lettuce though much easier of digestion than the cabbage in reality contains little or no nutriment. It is an old remark and experience and observation testify to its truth that it agrees better with some temperaments than others. The sanguine and the bilious may stand in need of its soothing active qualities but the phlegmatic requires no such comforts. Its narcotic properties



make it a weaker & more stomachic while in others  
its effects are reversed.

Very doubt perhaps exists of the liability of  
the Cucumber to impair the healthy action of the sto-  
mach and when impaired to bring on active disease  
in a very short time than of any other of the Fructus  
Huscarum common use in dietetics at our tables. They  
are of little service except as a refrigerant or conser-  
vative to accompany animal food. They have been  
discharged from the stomach with very little alter-  
ation after having been retained there 48 hours. In  
the raw or crude state they are always imminent  
to the gouty or dyspeptic stomach and may occasion-  
ally become the cause of alarming disorders unless  
superiorly modified by some culinary process.  
The farinaceous matter they contain may be in-  
potent but the juice which is said to possess  
the power of dissipating humors from the skin  
when applied externally will not infrequent-  
ly display its action on the gastric apparatus.

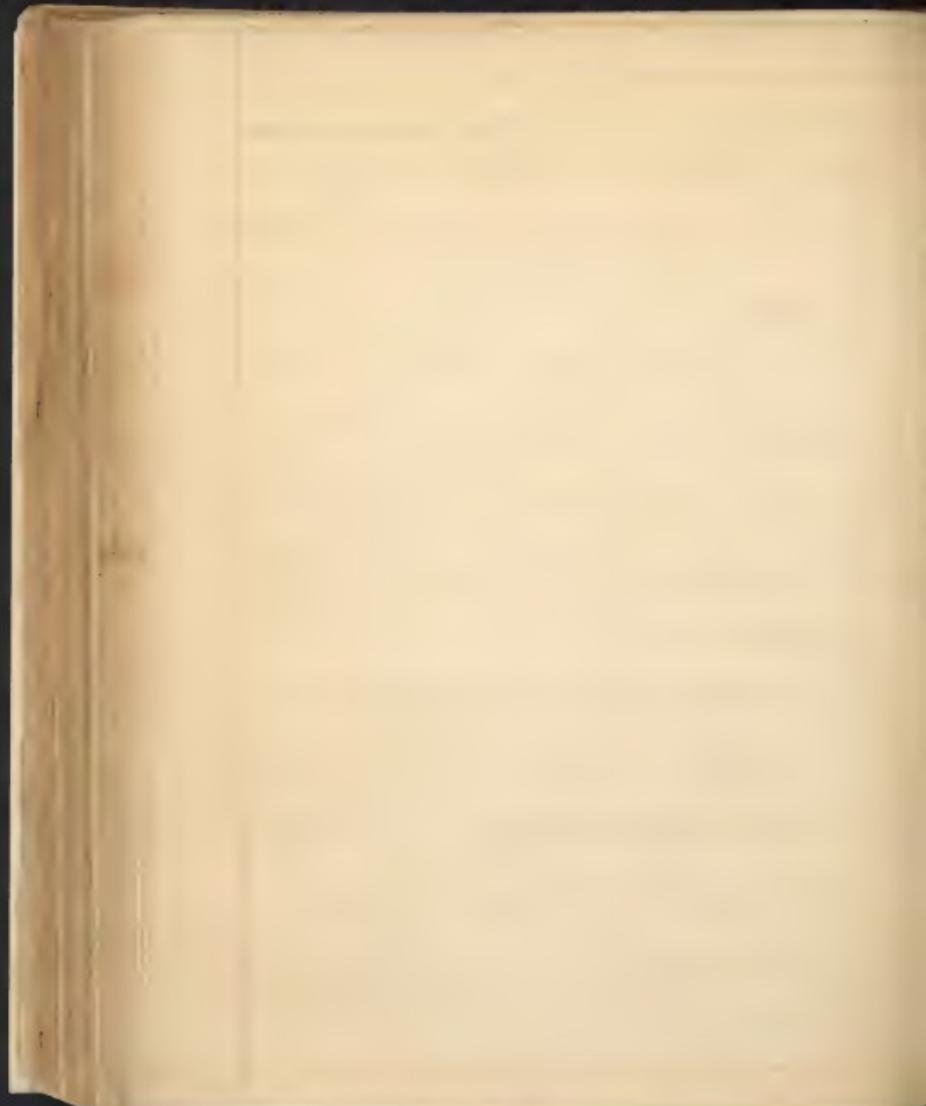


That the Potato does contain an active narcotic principle is now made manifest and why may it not upon particular idiosyncrasies and in certain States of the system favorable to a morbid impression become efficient in the production of disease? Yet this circumstance does not and cannot so far militate against its well established character as to weaken its well earned fame and high rank in the class of nutriments. It only implies that care may sometimes be necessary in its employment. Take from an Indian or the Potato and you make him much lower & smaller & the poor indeed! Soil, climate and cultivation have certainly much modified the *Solanum tuberosum*. Although furnishing a greater proportion of nutritive matter than almost any other of the excellent roots yet the question still remains "Sub judice" whether Potatoes alone can support a person in active and laborious life. During the scarcity in Scotland the Peasantry found that without

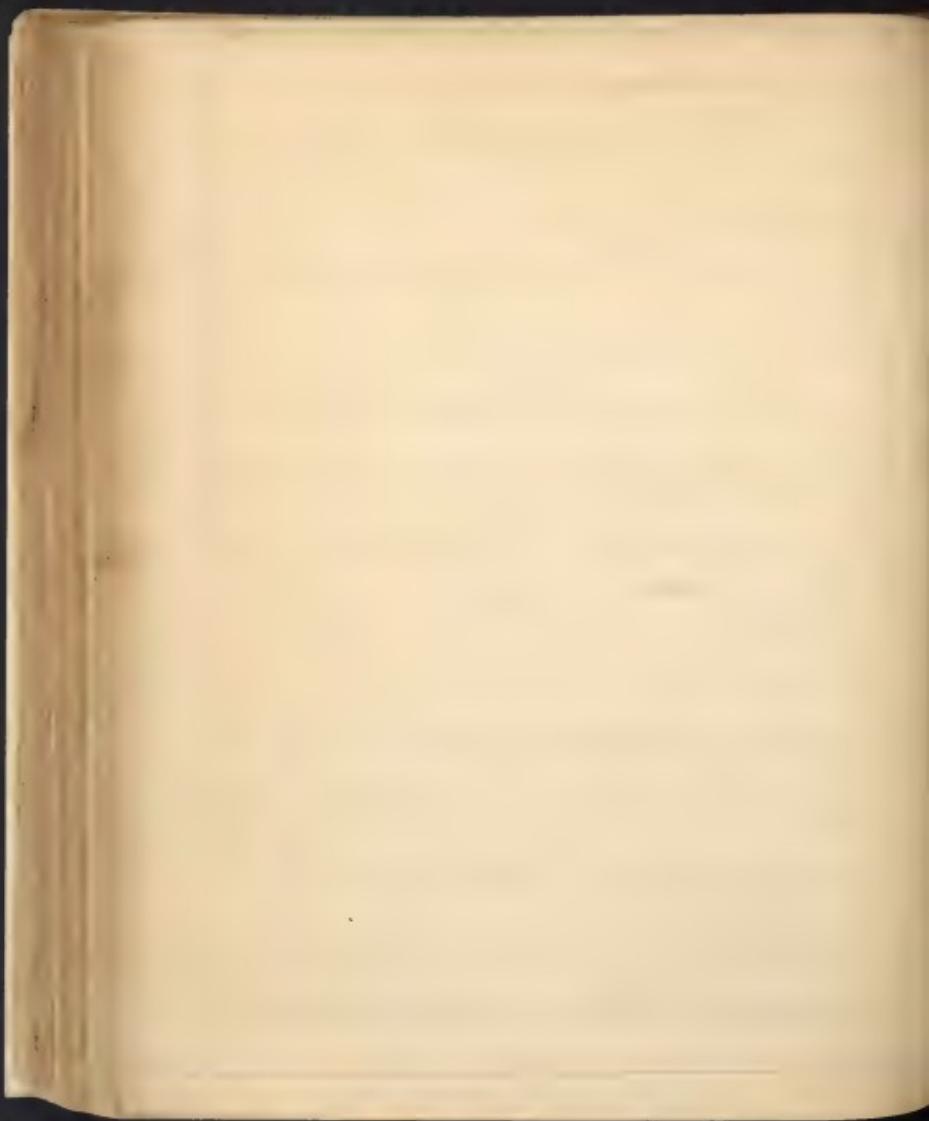


the addition of animal food they occasioned but  
lime debility and were at length totally in-  
sufficient to maintain life. It might be a bold  
assertion to say that the Irish Peasants will frequently  
bring about ~~the~~ <sup>these</sup> peptic and alimentary complaints  
while we have a quantum of circumstantial evidence  
to declare that they will contract or keep up a  
disordered state of the digestive organs and an  
emaciation in a but particularly of the ad-  
cedent kind. Like the Turnip they do not possess  
a laxative principle which could thereby correct  
any bad effect.

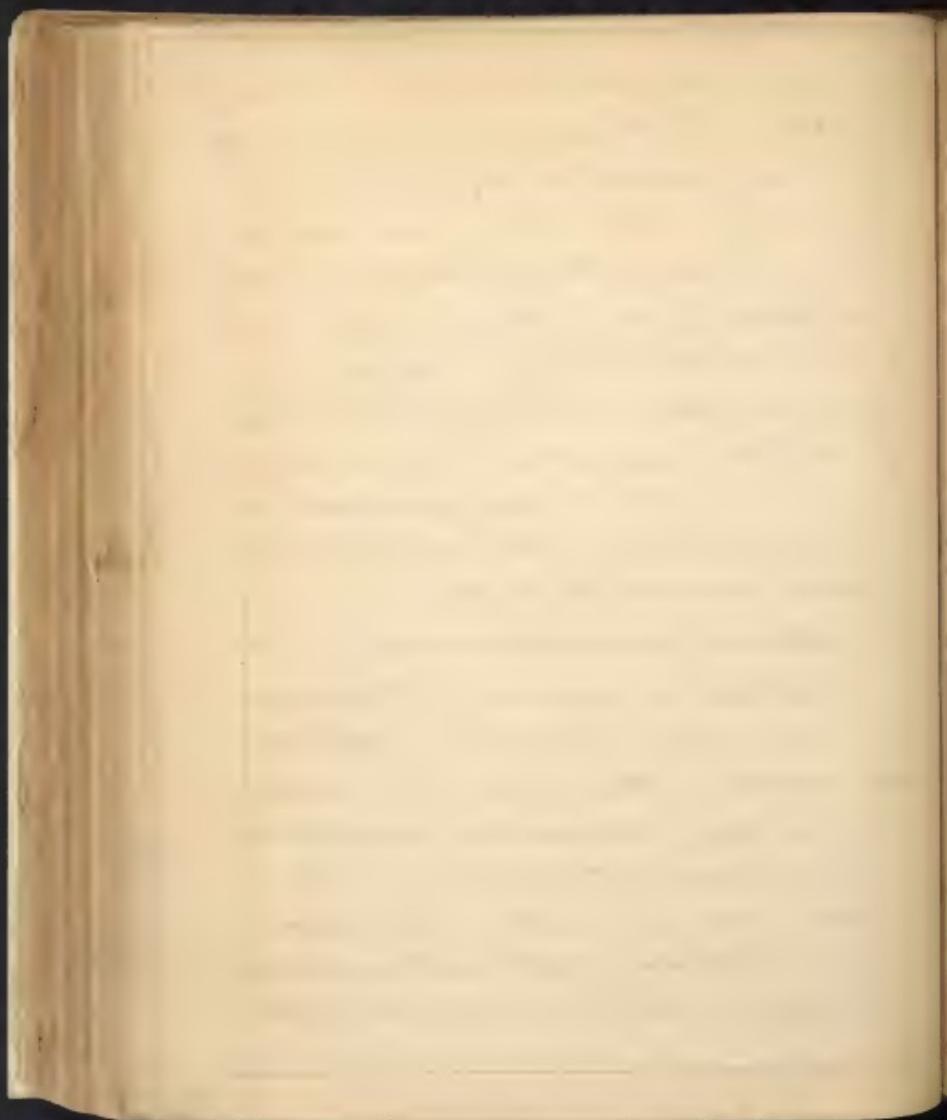
Mostly wholesome and concededly nutritious  
as is the flour of Wheat-rye and Indian corn  
we know of nothing so certainly noxious (yet so  
generally unsuspected) as each from moisture and  
a diseased state of the grain itself. As to the  
consequences of the poisonous nature of sprouted  
they inquiry and observation are rapidly and day-  
by developing facts corroborative of this position.



Epidemics which have devastated Upper Saxony and  
parts of France have all been traced to this cause. The  
effects of Ergot are different according to the time in  
which it has been used and the quantity taken. In  
those who have eaten of it for a short time it pro-  
duces a variety of nervous symptoms including what  
has been called convulsive ergotism while that caused  
by eating it for a longer time and in larger quan-  
tities has obtained the name of gangrenous Ergotism.  
The first is ushered in by an anxiety sensation of the  
feet a kind of tickling or creeping and speedily  
afterwards Cardialgia and disorder in the head  
and hands & this succeeds Tetanus contractions  
foaming at the mouth during thirst vertigo & the  
symptoms of Retraction. Mania - melancholia or  
soma. Almost all those affected as with Epilepsy die.  
In many the face is covered with an eruptive resum-  
bling Flea bites. The pulse is quite material. The dis-  
ease lasts 2. 4. 6 and sometimes 12 weeks with inter-  
vals of repose. Of the persons affected with it in

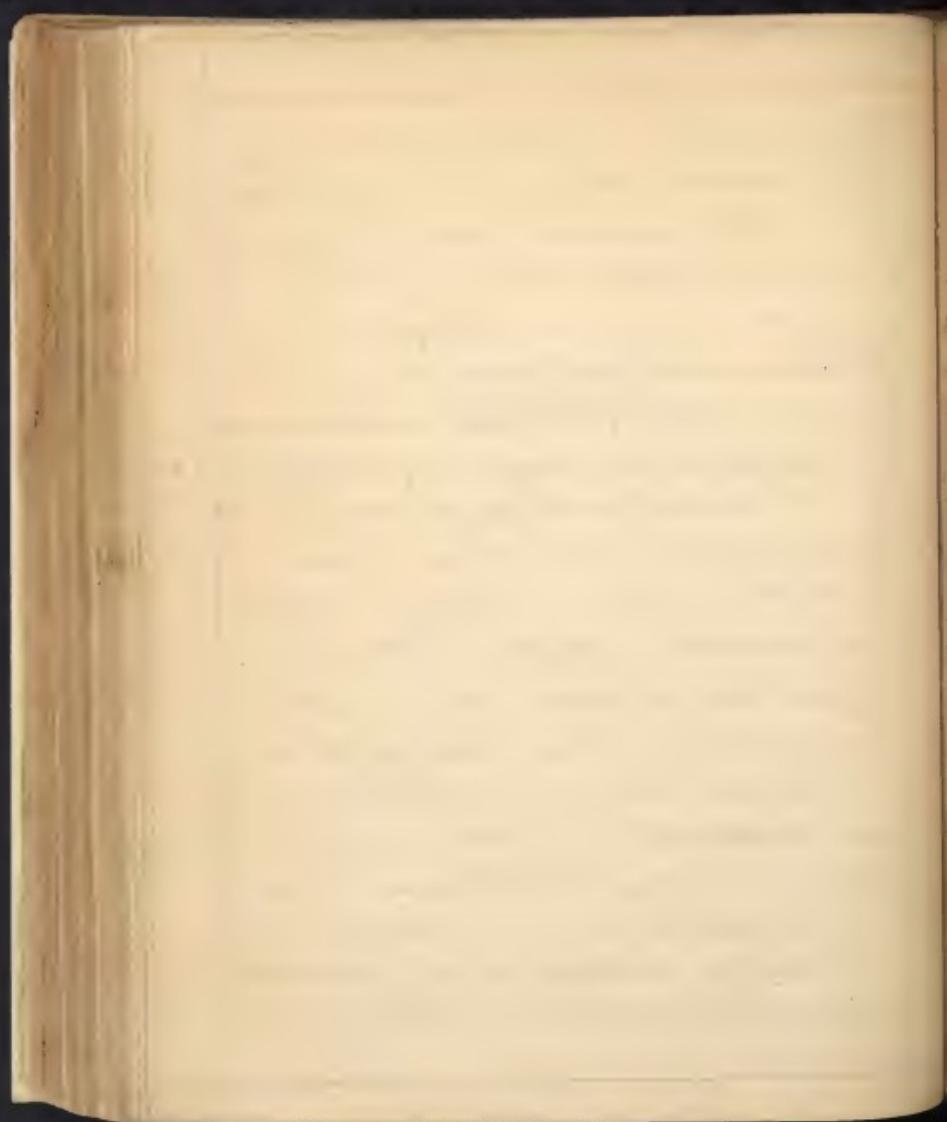


a part of Piles in 300 children, instances. The gangrenous affection commences with an acute pain and burning heat in the great toe which after a while ascends and girdles the legs. The foot then becomes cold, raw and livid. This state is succeeded by gangrene which rises to the knee. The leg is detached at its articulation and shows a healthy surface which soon heals if the previous mortid masses have been removed. The pain is usually more severe during the night than day. There is some chattering, the appetite is good and the functions regularly performed. Animals fed with spiced rye have after a while perished from gangrene of the limb-blaws and tails and acute inflammation of the testes. A medicine gentleman once informed me that the first crop of wheat upon newly cleared ground almost invariably contained a considerable proportion of smut or must and he has seen violent pain in the head and diarrhoea a result from its employment. It is a common and well



established notion that new warm bread is more difficult of digestion than cold sometimes lying in spasms of the stomach and paroxysms of gout and in opposition to the practice laid down by Dr. Cugay of Edinburgh in his medical lectures is injurious in Dyspepsia.

The Pomaceous things less exceptionable than the stone fruits particularly the Plum and Cherry are not without their inconveniences especially the Apple which is an enemy to a Dyspeptic stomach. It has been brought up in the same manner in which it was swallowed after a lapse of two days. The immoderate use of Apples and the Cider obtained from them in certain counties in England and Normandy have produced the remarkable colic and rheumatism. The colic which prevailed in Devonshire in 1724 and described by Rusham was due to this cause. The words of Horace "Pomiferus grave tempus annis" are not merely a poetical expression. In the indulgence in Pies pastries and cakes which are

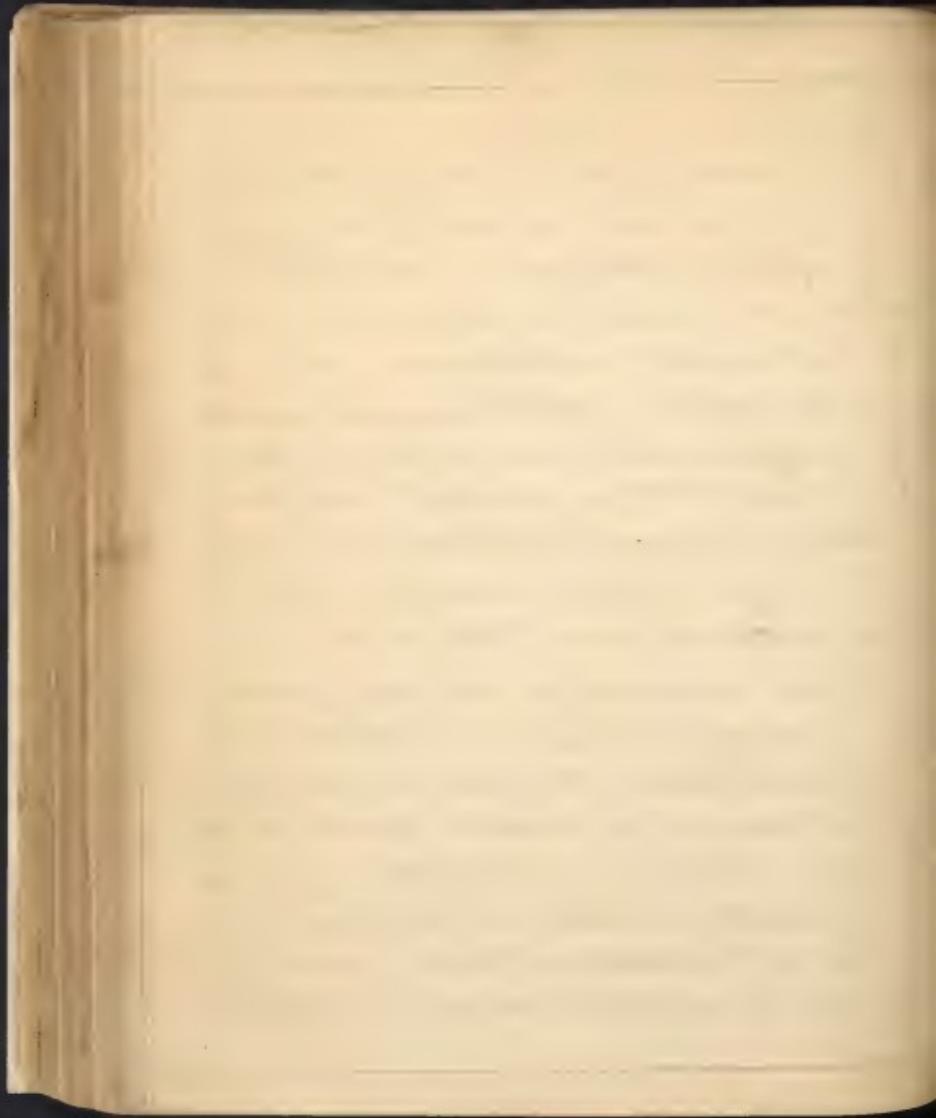


give some time in digesting may we trace a whole  
train of Dispepsia and Hippochondriac Complaints.  
When the Stomach is much languid or infec-  
ted in a trifling degree a small quantity of ani-  
mal may be preferable to vegetable diet but  
if it be irritable a tending to inflammation  
the reverse plan obtains the influence the Dys-  
pepsia of the youth but accompanied with fever  
and pain does not admit of its administration.  
It causes a torpor and fulness of the re-  
sists which in such cases are universally dele-  
terious. Its exclusive employment is the pecu-  
lior of hepatic eruptions and after a while  
chronic affections. Gullen says it brings on  
metabolism. It renders men dull heavy and  
inert in the pursuits of science. Not temper-  
ably a proper exercise and habitually accompa-  
nied with strong fermentation by no means a source  
of those unwieldy adipose depositions which also  
most universally indicate a departure from



health.

If now we pass from a survey of the different kinds of food made use of by man for the gratification of appetite and the support of sensual pleasure to the varieties of drink we see before us a series of the most interesting medical phenomena which can engage the attention of the Physician. Reason like "Angel trumpet though" has warning and sound. She has pointed to the awful waste of lives and the destruction of social bonds with a host of evils consequent upon intemperance. Man has and always will close his eyes in little insecurity. The minimalist and divine can shew but few trophies of success in their combat with this invisible foe. The blood of the earth has been the capital enemy of her sons. Her intoxicating bane has charms too alluring to be postponed for prudence, conducive to health and pointed out by reason. But in the execution of the original design of this essay I must confine myself to a very few



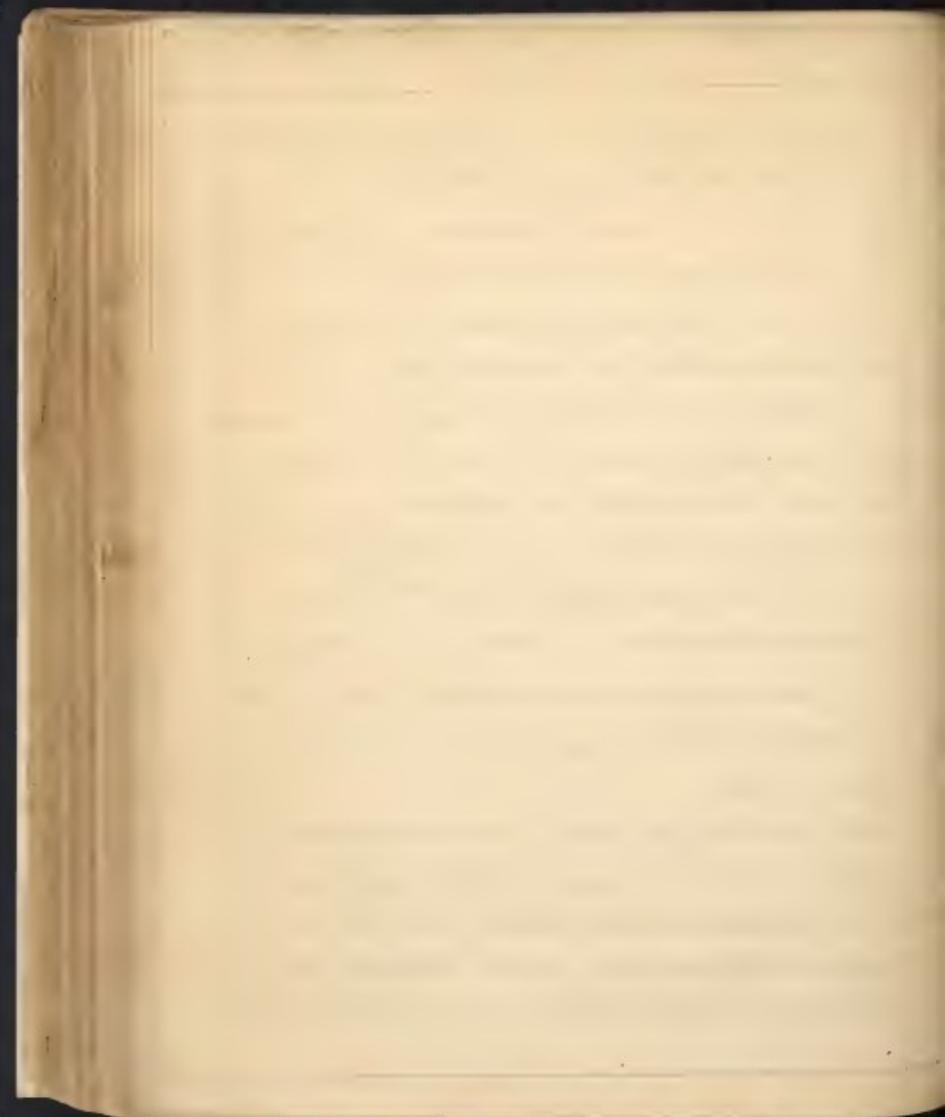
of the drinks and those of the more common kind  
and as simple beverages sanctioned by the first  
of time.

Tea was originally made use of for medicinal  
purposes but became a fashionable beverage from  
the example of Catharine countess of the Charles  
the 2d. who has made use of it in Portugal. It  
has likewise the recommendation of some distin-  
guished Dutch Physicians. It has been urged in  
its favor that it increases the power of digestion  
is an excellent concomitant of solid food destroys  
the insalubrious nature of some materia dissipates  
fever and effectually calms the turbulence of  
cancer. It has much evidence in support of its medi-  
cial qualities in fever and calculus complaints.  
Finally it has done much to support society. But  
by the opposite party more has been accomplish-  
ed. It is substantiated that the Tea leaf contains  
active minute agents which are poisonous even  
when in a dried condition. Its astringency at first



This may probably do indirectly debilitate. The ex-  
cited and indecisive character of the Chinese is con-  
sidered a result of the monotonous excitement of Tea drink-  
ing. The green Harrow is the most active but it is this  
almost solely which has furnished matter for dis-  
cussion. Lastly without an enumeration of all its  
mild effects when drunk for a length of time and  
in large quantities it is apt to occasion Tremors -  
Palsies and various other Symptoms arising from  
Paracocc plants while it aggravates Hydrocephalus  
and Hypochondriacal Complaints. Dr. Pollock now  
its strongest advocate was a solitary but sorry com-  
plement of pertinacity and infatuation attributable  
in a considerable degree to his frequent and long  
potations of Tea.

Coffee like Tea has had and still continues to retain its popularity and the grateful sensa-  
tions it produces on the sick or debilitated are  
much and the sedative power it exerts on the  
vis vitæ have secured for it many admirers.



The Turks and Arabians take it large quantities with peculiar propriety because it counteracts the narcotic effects of Opium to the use of which these nations are magically devoted. But like every other virtue this has a reverse. Dr. Percivale to determine its real effects upon the human body has made several experiments the result of which he gives in the following language. From these observations we may infer that Coffee is slightly astringent and antiseptic - that it modifies alimentary fermentation and is powerfully edative. Its action on the nervous system probably depends upon the oil it contains which receives its flavor and is rendered mild by cypreasmatic by the process of roasting. A tincture obtained by distillation from a pound of Coffee. Tounces 5 and a half drachms of water - 8 ounces and half a drachm of thick fetid oil and 4 ounces and 2 drachms of Caput Mortuum. It delicate habits it often occasions watchfulness and many



of those Complaints denominated Nervous. It has  
been suspected of producing Paroxysms and Dr. Keen  
dith a distinguished County Practitioner some months  
ago informed me he knew an individual who care-  
lessly used it without an attack of Epilepsy. Slave  
affirms that he became Paralytic by the too liber-  
al use of Coffee and that his disorder was  
only removed by an abstinence from this Liquor.  
The benefits arising from the Employment of hot  
strong Coffee in Asthma depend principally  
upon its Stimulant nature. Women who are  
liable to Miscarriage and the youthful Sanguine  
should avoid it. Though a slow poison it is of-  
ten a cure. Our own Germans and Dutch who  
employ it almost " sine limitatione" are soporiferous  
and Phlegmatick. Bellus the Swedish Philosopher  
who undermined his Constitution and eventually  
destroyed himself with this Beverage and while  
a Student of Medicine in Bethlehem my pre-  
ceptor pointed out a case of Mental alienation



tin originating in the abuse of Coffee drinking.

